

PAPERS FROM THE SOCIETY

FOR THE

Diffusion of Political Knowledge.

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READ—DISCUSS—DIFFUSE.
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BIBLE VIEW OF SLAVERY.

THE word "slave" occurs but twice in our English Bible, but the term "servant," commonly employed by our translators, has the meaning of slave in the Hebrew and the Greek originals, as a general rule, where it stands alone. We read, however, in many places, of "hired servants," and of "bondmen and bondmaids." The first were not slaves, but the others were; the distinction being precisely the same which exists in our own day. Slavery, therefore, may be defined as *servitude for life, descending to the offspring*. And this kind of bondage appears to have existed as an established institution in all the ages of our world, by the universal evidence of history, whether sacred or profane.

This understood, I shall not oppose the prevalent idea that slavery is an

evil in itself. A *physical* evil it may be, but this does not satisfy the judgment of its more zealous adversaries, since they contend that it is a *moral* evil—a positive *sin* to hold a human being in bondage, under any circumstances whatever, unless as a punishment inflicted on crimes, for the safety of the community.

Here, therefore, lies the true aspect of the controversy. And it is evident that it can only be settled by the Bible. For every Christian is bound to assent to the rule of the inspired Apostle, that "sin is the transgression of the law," namely, the law laid down in the Scriptures by the authority of God—the supreme "Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy." From his Word there can be no appeal. No rebellion can be so atrocious in his sight as that which dares to rise against his

government. No blasphemy can be more unpardonable than that which imputes sin or moral evil to the decrees of the eternal Judge, who is alone perfect in wisdom, in knowledge, and in love.

With entire correctness, therefore, your letter refers the question to the only infallible criterion—the Word of God. If it were a matter to be determined by my personal sympathies, tastes, or feelings, I should be as ready as any man to condemn the institution of slavery, for all my prejudices of education, habit, and social position stand entirely opposed to it. But as a Christian, I am solemnly warned not to be “wise in my own conceit,” and not to “lean to my own understanding.” As a Christian, I am compelled to submit my weak and erring intellect to the authority of the Almighty. For then only can I be safe in my conclusions, when I know that they are in accordance with the will of Him, before whose tribunal I must render a strict account in the last great day.

I proceed, accordingly, to the evidence of the sacred Scriptures, which, long ago, produced complete conviction in my own mind, and must, as I regard it, be equally conclusive to every candid and sincere inquirer. When the array of positive proof is exhibited, I shall consider the objections, and examine their validity with all the fairness in my power.

The first appearance of slavery in the Bible is the wonderful prediction of the patriarch Noah: “Cursed be Canaan, a *servant of servants* shall he be to his brethren. Blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and Canaan *shall be his servant*. God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan *shall be his servant*.” (Gen. 9: 25.)

The heartless irreverence which Ham, the father of Canaan, displayed toward his eminent parent, whose piety had just saved him from the deluge, presented the immediate occasion for this remarkable prophecy; but the actual fulfillment was reserved for his posterity, after they had lost the knowledge of God, and become utterly polluted by the abominations of heathen idolatry. The Almighty, foreseeing this total degradation of the race, ordained them to servitude or slavery under the descendants of Shem and Japhet, doubtless because he judged it to be their fittest condition. And all history proves how accurately the

prediction has been accomplished, even to the present day.

We come next to the proof that slavery was sanctioned by the Deity in the case of Abraham, whose three hundred and eighteen bond servants, born in his own house, (Gen. 14: 14,) are mentioned along with those who were *bought with his money*, as proper subjects for circumcision. (Gen. 17: 12.) His wife Sarah had also an Egyptian slave, named Hagar, who fled from her severity. And “the angel of the Lord” commanded the fugitive to *return to her mistress and submit herself*. (Gen. 16: 9.) If the philanthropists of our age, who profess to believe the Bible, had been willing to take the counsel of that angel for their guide, it would have preserved the peace and welfare of the Union.

The third proof that slavery was authorized by the Almighty occurs in the last of the Ten Commandments, delivered from Mount Sinai, and universally acknowledged by Jews and Christians as the moral law: “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, nor his *man-servant*, nor his *maid-servant*, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor’s.” (Exod. 20: 17.) Here it is evident that the principle of *property*—“any thing that is thy neighbor’s”—runs through the whole. I am quite aware, indeed, of the prejudice which many good people entertain against the idea of *property* in a human being, and shall consider it, in due time, amongst the objections. I am equally aware that the wives of our day may take umbrage at the law which places them in the same sentence with the slave, and even with the house and the cattle. But the truth is none the less certain. The husband has a real *property* in the wife, because she is bound, for life, to serve and to obey him. The wife has a real *property* in her husband, because he is bound for life to cherish and maintain her. The character of property is doubtless modified by its design. But whatever, whether person or thing, the law *appropriates* to an individual, becomes of necessity his *property*.

The fourth proof, however, is yet more express, as it is derived from the direct rule established by the wisdom of God for his chosen people, Israel, on the very point in question, namely:

“If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years shall he serve, and in the seventh year he shall go out free for nothing;

If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself. If he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master have given him a wife, and she have borne him sons or daughters, *the wife and the children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself.*" (Exod. 21 : 2-4.) Here we see that the separation of husband and wife is positively directed by the divine command, in order to secure the property of the master in his bond-maid and her offspring. But the husband had an alternative, if he preferred slavery to separation. For thus the law of God proceeds: "If the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free; then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door or unto the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and *he shall serve him forever.*" (Exod. 21 : 5, 6.) With this law before his eyes, what Christian can believe that the Almighty attached immorality or sin to the condition of slavery?

The treatment of slaves, especially as it regarded the degree of correction which the master might administer, occurs in the same chapter, as follows: "If a man smite his servant or his maid with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding if he continue a day or two, *he shall not be punished; for he is his money.*" (Exod. 21 : 20, 21.) And again, "If a man smite the eye of his servant or the eye of his maid, that it perish, he shall let him go free for his eye's sake. And if he smite out his man-servant's tooth, or his maid-servant's tooth, he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake." (Exod. 21 : 26, 27.) Here we see that the master was authorized to use corporal correction toward his slaves, within certain limits. When immediate death ensued, he was to be punished as the judges might determine. But for all that came short of this, the loss of his property was held to be a sufficient penalty.

The next evidence furnished by the divine law appears in the peculiar and admirable appointment of the Jubilee. "Ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a Jubilee unto you, and *ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man to his family.*" (Lev. 25 : 10.) This enactment, however did not affect the slaves,

because it only extended to the Israelites who had "a possession and a family," according to the original distribution of the land among the tribes. The distinction is plainly set forth in the same chapter, namely:

"If thy brother that dwelleth by thee be wuxen poor, and be sold unto thee, thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bond servant, but as a hired servant and as a sojourner he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of Jubilee, and then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return. For they are my servants which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt, they shall not be sold as bondmen. *Both thy bondmen and bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids.* Moreover, of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land, and they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; **THEY SHALL BE YOUR BONDMEN FOR EVER;** but over your brethren, the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigor. For unto me the children of Israel are servants; they are my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." (Lev. 25 : 40-46, with v. 55.)

The distinction here made between the temporary servitude of the Israelite and the perpetual bondage of the heathen race, is too plain for controversy. And this express and positive law furnishes the true meaning of another passage which the ultra abolitionist is very fond of repeating: "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee: he shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose, in one of thy gates where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him." (Deut. 23 : 15, 16.) This evidently must be referred to the case of a slave who had escaped from a *foreign heathen master*, and can not, with any sound reason, be applied to the slaves of the Israelites themselves. For it is manifest that if it were so applied, it would nullify the other enactments of the

divine Lawgiver, and it would have been an absurdity to tell the people that they should "buy bondmen and bondmaids of the heathen and the stranger, to be their possession and the inheritance of their children for ever," while, nevertheless, the slaves should be at liberty to run away and become freemen when they pleased. It is the well-known maxim, in the interpretation of all laws, that each sentence shall be so construed as to give a consistent meaning to the whole. And assuredly, if we are bound to follow this rule in the legislation of earth, we can not be less bound to follow it in the legislation of the Almighty. The meaning that I have adopted is the only one which agrees with the established principle of legal construction, and it has invariably been sanctioned by the doctors of the Jewish law, and every respectable Christian commentator.

Such, then, is the institution of slavery, laid down by the Lord God of Israel for his chosen people, and continued for fifteen centuries, until the new dispensation of the Gospel. What change did this produce? I grant, of course, that we, as Christians, are bound by the precepts and example of the Saviour and his apostles. Let us now, therefore, proceed to the all-important inquiry, whether we are authorized by these to presume that the Mosaic system was done away.

First, then, we ask what the divine Redeemer said in reference to slavery. And the answer is perfectly undeniable: HE DID NOT ALLUDE TO IT AT ALL. Not one word upon the subject is recorded by any of the four Evangelists who gave His life and doctrines to the world. Yet slavery was in full existence at the time, throughout Judea; and the Roman empire, according to the historian Gibbon, contained sixty millions of slaves, on the lowest probable computation! How prosperous and united would our glorious republic be at this hour, if the eloquent and pertinacious declaimers against slavery had been willing to follow their Saviour's example!

But did not our Lord substantially repeal the old law, by the mere fact that he established a new dispensation? Certainly not, unless they were incompatible. And that he did not consider them incompatible is clearly proved by his own express declaration. "Think not," saith he, "that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy,

but to fulfill." (Matt. 5: 17.) On that point, therefore, this single passage is perfectly conclusive.

It is said by some, however, that the great principle of the Gospel, love to God and love to man, necessarily involved the condemnation of slavery. Yet how should it have any such result; when we remember that this was no new principle, but, on the contrary, was laid down by the Deity to his own chosen people, and was quoted from the Old Testament by the Saviour himself? And why should slavery be thought inconsistent with it? In the relation of master and slave, we are assured by our Southern brethren that there is incomparably more mutual love than can ever be found between the employer and the hireling. And I can readily believe it, for the very reason that it is a relation for life, and the parties, when rightly disposed, must therefore feel a far stronger and deeper interest in each other.

The next evidence which proves that the Mosaic law was not held to be inconsistent with the Gospel occurs in the statement of the apostles to St. Paul, made some twenty years, at least, after the establishment of the first Christian church in Jerusalem. "Thou seest, brother," said they, "how many thousands of Jews there are who believe, and they are all zealous of the law." (Acts 21: 20.) How could this have been possible, if the law was supposed to be abolished by the new dispensation?

But the precepts and the conduct of St. Paul himself, the great apostle of the Gentiles, are all sufficient, because he meets the very point, and settles the whole question. Thus he saith to the Ephesians: "Servants, (in the original Greek, *bond servants* or slaves) "be obedient to them that are your masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your hearts, as unto Christ. Not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not unto men, knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening, knowing that your Master also is in heaven, neither is there any respect of persons with him." (Eph. 6: 5-9.)

Again, to the Colossians, St. Paul

repeats the same commandments. "Servants," (that is, *bond servants* or slaves) "obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God." (Col. 3 : 22.) "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." (Col. 4 : 1.)

Again, the same inspired teacher lays down the law in very strong terms, to Timothy, the first Bishop of Ephesus : "Let as many servants as are under the yoke," (that is, the yoke of bondage,) "count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather do them service because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort. *If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness.* From such withdraw thyself. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." (1 Tim. 6 : 1-8.)

Lastly, St. Paul, in his Epistle to Philemon, informs him that he had sent back his fugitive slave, whom the apostle had converted to the Christian faith during his imprisonment, asking the master to forgive and receive his penitent disciple. "I beseech thee for my son Onesimus," saith he, "whom I have begotten in my bonds, which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me, whom I have sent again : thou therefore receive him that is mine own bowels, whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel. But without thy mind would I do nothing, that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly. For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him forever, not now as a servant, but above a servant, a

brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord. If thou countest me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account. I Paul have written it with mine own hand. I will repay it ; albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me thine own soul besides." (Ep. to Philemon 5 : 10, 19.)

The evidence of the New Testament is thus complete, plainly proving that the institution of slavery was not abolished by the Gospel. Compare now the course of the ultra abolitionist with that of Christ and his inspired apostle. The divine Redeemer openly rebukes the sanctimonious Pharisees, "who made void the law of God by their traditions." He spares not the wealthy, infidel Sadducees. He denounces the hypocritical Scribes, who "loved the uppermost rooms at feasts and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi." He calls the royal Herod "that fox," entirely regardless of the king's displeasure. He censures severely the Jewish practice of divorcing their wives for the slightest cause, and vindicates the original sanctity of marriage. He tells the deluded crowd of his enemies that they are "the children of the devil, and that the lusts of their fathers they would do." He makes a scourge of small cords, and drives the buyers and sellers out of the temple. And while he thus rebukes the sins of all around him, and speaks with divine authority, he proclaims himself the special friend and patron of the poor—preaches to them his blessed doctrine, on the mountain, by the seaside, or in the public streets, under the open canopy of heaven—heals their diseases, partakes of their humble fare, and, passing by the rich and the great, chooses his apostles from the ranks of the publicans and the fishermen of Galilee. Yet he lived in the midst of slavery, maintained over the old heathen races, in accordance with the Mosaic law, and uttered not one word against it ! What proof can be stronger than this, that he did not regard it as a sin or a moral evil ? And what contrast can be more manifest than this example of Christ on the one hand, and the loud and bitter denunciations of our anti-slavery preachers and politicians, *calling themselves Christians*, on the other ? For they not only set themselves against the Word of God in this matter, condemning slavery as the "monster

sin," the "sum of all villainies," but—strange to say—they do it in the very name of that Saviour whose whole line of conduct was the very opposite of their own!

Look next at the contrast afforded by the inspired Apostle of the Gentiles. He preaches to the slave, and tells him to be obedient to his master for Christ's sake, faithful and submissive, as a main branch of religious duty. He preaches to the master and tells him to be just and equal to his slave, knowing that his Master is in heaven. He finds a fugitive slave, and converts him to the Gospel, and then sends him back again to his old home, with a letter of kind recommendation. Why does St. Paul act thus? Why does he not counsel the fugitive to claim his right to freedom, and defend that right, if necessary, by the strong hand of violence, even unto death? Why does he not write to his disciple, Philemon, and rebuke him for the awful sin of holding a fellow-man in bondage, and charge it upon him, as a solemn duty, to emancipate his slaves, at the peril of his soul.

The answer is very plain. *St. Paul was inspired, and knew the will of the Lord Jesus Christ, and was only intent on obeying it.* And who are we, that in our modern wisdom presume to set aside the Word of God, and scorn the example of the divine Redeemer, and spurn the preaching and the conduct of the apostles, and invent for ourselves a "higher law" than those holy Scriptures which are given to us as "a light to our feet and a lamp to our paths," in the darkness of a sinful and polluted world? Who are we, that virtually blot out the language of the sacred record, and dictate to the Majesty of heaven what he shall regard as sin, and reward as duty? Who are we, that are ready to trample on the doctrine of the Bible, and tear to shreds the Constitution of our country, and even plunge the land into the untold horrors of civil war, and yet boldly pray to the God of Israel to bless our very acts of rebellion against his own sovereign authority? Woe to our Union when the blind become the leaders of the blind! Woe to the man who dares to "strive against his Maker!"

Yet I do not mean to charge the numerous and respectable friends of this popular delusion with a wilful or conscious opposition to the truth. They are seduced, doubtless, in the great majority of cases, by the feelings of a false philanthropy, which palliates, if it

can not excuse, their dangerous error. Living far away from the Southern States, with no practical experience of the institution, and accustomed, from their childhood, to attach an inordinate value to their personal liberty, they are naturally disposed to compassionate the negro race, and to believe that the slave must be supremely wretched in his bondage. They are under no special inducement to "search the Scriptures" on this particular subject, nor are they in general, I am sorry to say, accustomed to study the Bible half as much as they read the newspapers, the novel and the magazine. There they find many revolting pictures of slavery, and they do not pause to ask the question whether they are just and fair. Perhaps a fugitive comes along, who has fled from his master, and who, in justification of himself, will usually give a very distorted statement of the facts, even if he does not invent them altogether. And these good and kind-hearted people believe it all implicitly, without ever remembering the rule about *hearing both sides* before we form our opinion. Of course, they sympathize warmly with the poor, oppressed African, and are generously excited to hate the system of slavery with all their heart. Then the eloquent preacher chooses it for the favorite topic of his oratory. The theme is well adapted to rouse the feelings, and it is usually by no means difficult to interest and gratify the audience, when the supposed sins of others, which they are under no temptation to commit, are made the object of censure. In due time, when the public mind is sufficiently heated, the politician lays hold of the subject, and makes the anti-slavery movement the watchword of party. And finally the Press follows in the wake of the leaders, and the fire is industriously fanned until it becomes a perfect blaze; while the admiring throng surround it with exultation, and fancy its lurid light to be from heaven, until the flames begin to threaten their own security.

Such has been the perilous course of our Northern sentiment on the subject of slavery. The great majority, in every community, are the creatures of habit, of association and of impulse, and every allowance should be made for those errors which are committed in ignorance, under a generous sympathy for what they suppose to be the rights of man. I can not, however, make the same apology for those who

are professionally pledged to understand and inculcate the doctrines of the Bible. On that class of our public instructors, the present perilous crisis of the nation casts a fearful responsibility. Solemnly bound by their sacred office to preach the Word of God, and to follow Christ and his apostles, as the heralds of "peace and goodwill to men," they seem to me strangely regardless, on this important subject, of their highest obligations. But it is not for me to judge them. To their own Master, let them stand or fall.

I have promised, however, to notice the various objections which have been raised in the popular mind to the institution of Southern slavery, and to these I shall now proceed.

First on this list stand the propositions of the far famed Declaration of Independence, "that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." These statements are here called "self-evident truths." But with due respect to the celebrated names which are appended to this document, I have never been able to comprehend that they are "truths" at all. In what respect are men "created equal," when every thoughtful person must be sensible that they are brought into the world with all imaginable difference in body, in mind, and in every characteristic of their social position? Notwithstanding mankind have all descended from one common parent, yet we see them divided into distinct races, so strongly marked, that infidel philosophers insist on the impossibility of their having the same ancestry. Where is the equality in *body* between the child born with the hereditary taint of scrofula or consumption, and the infant filled with health and vigor? Where is the equality in *mind* between one who is endowed with talent and genius, and another whose intellect borders on idiocy? Where is the equality in *social position* between the son of the Esquimaux or Hottentot, and the heir of the American statesman or British peer?

Neither am I able to admit that all men are endowed with the *unalienable* right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, because it is manifest that since "sin entered into the world and death by sin," they are all *alienated*, forfeited and lost, through the consequences of transgression. Life is

alienated not only by the sentence of the law, but by innumerable forms of violence and accident. Liberty is *alienated* not only by imprisonment, but by the irresistible restraints of social bondage to the will, the temper, the prejudices, the customs, or the interests of others; so that there is hardly an individual to be found, even in the most favored community, who has really the liberty of word and action so confidently asserted as the *unalienable* right of all men. And as regards the "pursuit of happiness," alas! what multitudes *alienate* their right to it, beyond recovery, not only in the cells of the penitentiary, but in the reckless indulgence of their appetites and passions, in the disgust arising from ill-chosen conjugal relations, in their associations with the profligate and the vile, in the pain and suffering of sickness and poverty as the results of vice, in the ruin of the gambler, the delirium of the drunkard, the despair of the suicide, and in every other form of moral contamination!

If it be said, however, that the equality and unalienable rights of all men, so strongly asserted by this famous Declaration, are only to be taken in a *political* sense, I am willing to concede that this may be the proper interpretation of its intended meaning, but I can not see how it removes the difficulty. The statement is that "all men are *created equal*," and that "the CREATOR has endowed them with these *unalienable* rights." Certainly if the authors of this celebrated document designed to speak only of *political* rights and *political* equality, they should not have thus referred them to the act of creation, because it is perfectly obvious that, since the beginning of human government, men have been created with all imaginable inequality, under slavery, under despotism, under aristocracy, under limited monarchy, under every imaginable form of political strife and political oppression. In no respect whatever, that I can discover, has the Almighty sent our race into the world with these imaginary rights, and this fanciful equality. In his sight the whole world is sinful, rebellious, and lying under the just condemnation of his violated laws. Our original rights, whatever they might have been, are all forfeited and gone. And since the fall, mankind have no *rights* to claim at the hand of the Creator. Our whole dependence is on his *mercy and compassion*. And

he dispenses these according to his sovereign will and pleasure, on no system of equality that any human eye can discover, and yet, as every Christian must believe, on the eternal principles of perfect benevolence, in union with impartial justice, and boundless knowledge, and wisdom that can not err.

Where, then, I ask, did the authors of the Declaration of Independence find their warrant for such a statement? It was probably judicious enough to call their propositions "self-evident truths," because it seems manifest that no man can prove them. To estimate might the vast diversity among the races of mankind, we may begin with our own, the highly privileged Anglo-Saxon, which now stands at the head, although our ancestors were heathen barbarians only two thousand years ago. From this we may go down the descending scale through the Turks, the Chinese, the Tartars, the Japanese, the Egyptians, the Hindoos, the Indian tribes, the Laplanders, the Abyssinians, the Africans, and how is it possible to imagine that God has made them all *equal*? As truly might it be said that all the trees of the forest are equal—that all the mountains, and seas, and rivers are equal—that all the beasts of the fields are equal—that all the birds of the air are equal. The facts rather establish the very contrary. The Deity seems to take pleasure in exhibiting a marvelous wealth of power through the rich variety of all his works, so that no two individuals of any species can be found in all respects alike. And hence we behold a grand system of order and GRADATION, from the thrones, dominions, principalities and powers in heavenly places, rank below rank, to man. And then we see the same system throughout our earth displayed in the variety of races, some higher, some lower in the scale—in the variety of governments, from pure despotism to pure democracy—in the variety of privilege and power among the subjects of each government, some being born to commanding authority and influence, while others are destined to submit and obey. Again, we behold the system continued in the animal creation, from the lordly lion down to the timid mole, from the eagle to the humming bird, from the monsters of the deep to the sea star in its shell. The same plan meets us in the insect tribes. Some swift and powerful, others slow and

weak, some marshaled into a regular government—monarchy in the beehive, aristocracy in the ant-hill, while others, like the flies, have no government at all. And in perfect harmony with this divine arrangement, the inanimate creation presents us with the same vast variety. The canopy of heaven is studded with orbs of light, all differing in magnitude, all differing in radiance, and all yielding to the sovereign splendor of the sun. The earth is clothed with the most profuse diversity of vegetation, from the lofty palm down to the humble moss. The mineral kingdom shines with gold, silver, iron, copper, and precious stones, in all conceivable forms and colors. From the mammoth cave down to the minutest crystal—from mountains of granite down to the sand upon the shore, all is varied, multiform, unequal, yet each element has its specific use and beauty, and the grand aggregate unites in the sublime hymn of praise to the wisdom, the goodness, and the stupendous resources of that ineffable Power which produced the whole.

This brief and most inadequate sketch of the order of creation may serve at least to show that the manifest inequality in the condition of mankind is no exception to the rule, but is sustained by all analogy. It is the will of God that it should be so, and no human sagacity or effort can prevent it. And the same principle exists in our political relations. We may talk as we please of our equality in political rights and privileges, but in point of fact, there is no such thing. Amongst the other civilized nations it is not even pretended. None of the great galaxy of European governments can have a better title to it than England, yet who would be so absurd as to claim political equality in a land of monarchy, of hereditary nobles, of time-honored aristocracy? The best approach to political equality is confessedly here, and here only. Yet even here, amidst the glories of our universal suffrage, where is it to be found? Political equality, if it means any thing, must mean that every man enjoys the same right to political office and honor; because the *polity* of any government consists in its *system of administration*, and hence it results, of necessity, that those who can not possibly be admitted to share in this administration, have no *political equality* with those who can. We do, indeed, say that the *people are*

sovereign. But every one knows, full well, that the comparative few who are qualified to take the lead, by talent, by education, by natural tact, and by a conjunction of favoring circumstances, are practically *sovereigns over the people.* The man who carries a nod gives his vote for the candidate. The candidate himself can do no more, so far as it concerns the mere form of election. Are they therefore politically equal? Who formed the party to which the candidate belongs? Who ruled the convention by which his name was put upon the list? Who arranged the orators for the occasion? Who subsidized the Press? Had the poor hodman any share in the operation, any influence, any voice whatever? No more than the hod which he carries. Can any human power ever manufacture a candidate out of *him*? The notion would be preposterous. Where then is his political equality? Even here, in our happy land of universal suffrage, how does it appear that "*all men are born equal*"? The proposition is a sheer absurdity. All men are born *unequal*, in body, in mind, and social privileges. Their intellectual faculties are unequal. Their education is unequal. Their associations are unequal. Their opportunities are unequal. And their freedom is as unreal as their equality. The poor are compelled to serve the rich, and the rich are compelled to serve the poor by paying for their services. The political party is compelled to serve the leaders, and the leaders are compelled to scheme and toil, in order to serve the party. The multitude are dependent on the few who are endowed with talents to govern. And the few are dependent on the multitude for the power, without which all government is impossible. From the top to the bottom of the social fabric, the whole is thus seen to be *inequality* and *mutual dependence.* And hence, although they are free from that special kind of slavery which the Southern States maintain over the posterity of Ham, yet they are all, from the highest to the lowest, in bondage quite as real, from which they can not escape—the *slavery of circumstances*, called, in the ordinary language of the world, *NECESSITY.*

I have been, I fear, unreasonably tedious in thus endeavoring to show why I utterly discard these famous propositions of the Declaration of

Independence. It is because I am aware of the strong hold which they have gained over the ordinary mind of the nation. They are assumed by thousands upon thousands, as if they were the very doctrines of divine truth. And they are made the basis of the hostile feeling against the slavery of the South, notwithstanding their total want of rationality. Yet I do not wonder that such maxims should be popular. They are admirably calculated to gratify the pride and ambition so natural to the human heart, and are therefore powerful incentives in the work of political revolution. It was for this purpose, I presume, that they were introduced in that famous document, which publicly cast off the allegiance of the colonies to the British crown. And the same doctrines were proclaimed a few years later, in a similar service, by the French Directory, in the midst of a far more terrible revolution. *Liberty, equality, and fraternity*—THE RIGHTS OF MAN, were then the watchwords of the excited populace, while their insane leaders published the decree of Atheism, and a notorious courtesan was enthroned as the goddess of reason, and the guillotine daily massacred the victims of democratic fury, till the streets of Paris ran with blood.

I do not state this fact because I desire to place the revolutions in the Colonies and in France on the same foundation, with respect to the *spirit* or the *mode* in which they were conducted. God forbid that I should forget the marked features of contrast between them! On the one side, there was religious reverence, strong piety, and pure disinterested patriotism. On the other, there was the madness of atheism, the brutality of ruffianism, and the "reign of terror" to all that was good and true. In no one mark or character, indeed, could I deem that there was any comparison between them, save in this: that the same false assumption of human equality and human rights was adopted in both. Yet how widely different was their result on the question of negro slavery! The American revolution produced no effect whatever on that institution; while the French revolution roused the slaves of their colony in St. Domingo to a general insurrection, and a scene of barbarous and cruel butchery succeeded, to which the history of the world contains no parallel.

This brings me to the last remarks

which I have to present on this famous Declaration. And I respectfully ask my readers to consider them maturely.

First, then, it seems manifest, that when the signers of this document assumed that "*all men were born equal*," they did not take the negro race into account at all. It is unquestionable that the author, Mr. Jefferson, was a slaveholder at the time, and continued so to his life's end. It is certain that the great majority of the other signers of the Declaration were slaveholders likewise. No one can be ignorant of the fact that slavery had been introduced into all the colonies long before, and continued to exist long after, in every State save one. Surely then, it can not be presumed that these able and sagacious men intended to stultify themselves by declaring that the negro race had rights, which nevertheless they were not ready to give them. And yet it is evident, that we must either impute this crying injustice to our revolutionary patriots, or suppose that the case of the slaves was not contemplated.

Nor is this a solitary example, for we have a complete parallel to it in the preamble to the Constitution, where the important phrase, "We, the people of the United States," must be understood with the very same limitation. Who were the people? Undoubtedly the free citizens who voted for the Constitution. Were the slaves counted as a part of that people? By no means. The negro race had no voice, no vote, no influence whatever in the matter. Thus, therefore, it seems perfectly plain that both these instruments must be understood according to the same rule of interpretation. The slaves were not included in the Declaration of Independence, for the same reason precisely that they were not included amongst the "people" who adopted the Constitution of the United States.

Now it is the established maxim of the law, that every written document must be understood according to the *true intent* of the parties when it was executed. The language employed may be such that it admits of a different sense; but there can be only one *just* interpretation, and that is fixed unalterably by the apparent meaning of its authors at the time. On this ground alone, therefore, I respectfully contend that the Declaration of Independence has no claim whatever to be considered in the controversy of our

day. I have stated, at some length, my reasons for rejecting its famous propositions, as being totally fallacious and untenable. But even if they were ever so "self-evident," or capable of the most rigid demonstration, the rule of law utterly forbids us to appeal to them in a sense which they were not designed to bear.

In the second place, however, it should be remembered that the Declaration of Independence, whether true or false, whether it be interpreted legally or illegally, *forms no part of our present system*. As a great historical document, it stands, and must ever stand, prominent before the nations of the world. But it was put forth more than seven years anterior to the Constitution. Its language was not adopted in that Constitution, and it has no place whatever in the obligatory law of the United States. When our orators, our preachers, and our politicians, therefore, take its propositions about human rights and human equality, and set them up as the supreme law, overruling the Constitution and the acts of Congress, which are the *real law* of the land, I can not wonder enough at the absurdity of the proceeding. And I doubt whether the annals of civilized mankind can furnish a stronger instance of unmitigated perversity.

Thirdly, and lastly, I am utterly opposed to those popular propositions, not only because I hold them to be altogether fallacious and untrue, for the reasons already given, but further, because their *tendency* is in direct contrariety to the precepts of the Gospel, and the highest interests of the individual man. For what is the unavoidable effect of this doctrine of human equality? Is it not to nourish the spirit of pride, envy, and contention? To set the servant against the master, the poor against the rich, the weak against the strong, the ignorant against the educated? To loosen all the bonds and relations of society, and reduce the whole duty of subordination to the selfish cupidity of pecuniary interest, without an atom of respect for age, for office, for law, for government, for Providence, or for the word of God?

I do not deny, indeed, that this doctrine of equality is a doctrine of immense power to urge men forward in a constant struggle for advancement. Its natural operation is to force the vast majority into a ceaseless contest

with their circumstances, each discontented with his lot, so long as he sees any one else above him, and toiling with unceasing effort to rise upon the social scale of wealth and importance, as fast and as far as he can. There is no principle of stronger impulse to stimulate ambition in every department. And hence arises its manifold influence on the business, the enterprise, the commerce, the manufactures, the agriculture, the amusements, the fashions and the political strifes of our Northern people, making them all restless, all aspiring, and all determined, if possible, to pass their rivals in the race of selfish emulation.

But how does it operate on the order, the stability, and the ultimate prosperity of the nation? How does it work on the steadfast administration of justice, the honor and purity of our public officers, the quiet subordination of the various classes in the community, the fidelity and submission of domestics, the obedience of children, and the relations of family and home? Above all, how does it harmonize with the great doctrines of the Bible, that the Almighty Ruler appoints to every man his lot on earth, and commands him to be satisfied and thankful for his portion—that we must submit ourselves to those who have the rule over us—that we should obey the laws and honor the magistrates—that the powers that be are ordained of God, and he that resisteth the power shall receive condemnation—that we may not covet the property of others—that having food and raiment, we should be therewith content—that we must avoid strife, contention and railing accusations, and follow peace, charity, and good will, remembering that the service of Christ is the only perfect freedom, and that our true happiness depends not on the measure of our earthly wealth, on social equality, on honor, or on our relative position in the community, but on the fulfillment of our personal duty according to our lot, in reliance on His blessing?

I have no more to add, with respect to this most popular dogma of human equality, and shall therefore dismiss it, as fallacious in itself, and only mischievous in its tendency. As it is the stronghold of the ultra-abolitionist, I have devoted a large space to its examination, and trust that the conclusion is sufficiently plain. Happily it forms no part of our Constitution or our laws. It never was intended to

apply to the question of negro slavery. And it never can be so applied without a total perversion of its historical meaning, and an absolute contrariety to all the facts of humanity, and the clear instruction of the Word of God.

The next objection to the Slavery of the Southern States, is its presumed *cruelty*, because the refractory slave is punished with corporal correction. But our Northern law allows the same in the case of children and apprentices. Such was the established system in the army and the navy, until very lately. The whipping-post was a fixed institution in England and Massachusetts, and its discipline was administered even to free citizens during the last century. Stripes, not exceeding forty, were appointed to offenders in Israel by divine authority. The Saviour himself used a scourge of small cords when he drove the money-changers from the temple. Are our modern philanthropists more merciful than Christ, and wiser than the Almighty?

But it is said that the poor slaves are treated with *barbarity*, and doubtless it may sometimes be true, just as soldiers and sailors, and even wives and children, are shamefully abused amongst ourselves, in many instances. It is evident, however, that the system of slavery can not be specially liable to reproach on this score, because every motive of interest as well as moral duty must be opposed to it. The owner of the horse and the ox rarely treats his brutes with severity. Why should he? The animals are his property, and he knows that they must be kindly and carefully used, if he would derive advantage from their labor. Much more must the master of the slave be expected to treat him with all fairness and affection, because here there are human feelings to be influenced, and if the servant be not contented and attached, not only will he work unwillingly, but he may be converted into an enemy and an avenger. When the master is a Christian, the principles of the Gospel, as laid down by St. Paul, will operate, of course, in favor of the slave. But even when these are wanting, the motives of interest and prudence remain. And hence I can not doubt that the examples of barbarity must be exceedingly few, and ought to be regarded, not as the general rule, but as the rare exceptions. On the whole, indeed, I see no reason to deny the statement of our Southern friends, that their slaves

are the happiest laborers in the world. Their wants are all provided for by their master. Their families are sure of a home and maintenance for life. In sickness they are kindly nursed. In old age they are affectionately supported. They are relieved from all anxiety for the future. Their religious privileges are generously accorded to them. Their work is light. Their holidays are numerous. And hence the strong affection which they usually manifest toward their master, and the earnest longing which many, who were persuaded to become fugitives, have been known to express, that they might be able to return.

The third objection is, that slavery must be a *sin*, because it leads to *immorality*. But where is the evidence of this? I dispute not against the probability and even the certainty that there are instances of licentiousness enough among slaveholders, just as there are amongst those who vilify them. It would be a difficult, if not an impossible task, however, to prove that there is more immorality amongst the slaves themselves, than exists amongst the lower class of freemen. In Sabbath-breaking, profane cursing and swearing, gambling, drunkenness and quarreling—in brutal abuse of wives and children, in rowdyism and obscenity, in the vilest excesses of shameless prostitution—to say nothing of organized bands of counterfeiters, thieves and burglars—I doubt whether there are not more offenses against Christian morality committed in the single city of New-York than can be found amongst the slave population of all the fifteen States together. The fact would rather seem to be that the wholesome restraints of slavery, as a general rule, must be, to a great extent, an effectual check upon the worst kinds of immorality. And therefore this charge, so often brought against it, stands entirely unsupported either by positive proof or by rational probability.

The fourth objection is advanced by a multitude of excellent people, who are shocked at the institution of slavery, because it involves the principle of *property in man*. Yet I have never been able to understand what it is that so disgusts them. No slaveholder pretends that this property extends any farther than the *right to the labor of the slave*. It is obvious to the slightest reflection that slavery can not bind the intellect or the soul. These, which

properly constitute the *MAN*, are *free*, in their own nature, from all human restraint. But to have a *property in human labor*, under some form, is an essential element in all the work of civilized society. The toil of one is pledged for the service of another in every rank of life; and to the extent thus pledged, both parties have a *property* in each other. The parent especially has an established *property* in the labor of his child to the age of twenty-one, and has the further power of transferring this property to another, by articles of apprenticeship. But this, it may be said, ends when the child is of age. True; because the law presumes him to be then fitted for freedom. Suppose, however, that he belonged to an inferior race which the *law did not presume to be fitted for freedom at any age*, what good reason could be assigned against the continuance of the property? Such, under the rule of the Scriptures and the Constitution of the United States, is the case of the negro. God, in his wisdom and providence, caused the patriarch Noah to predict that he should be the *servant of servants* to the posterity of Japhet. And the same almighty Ruler, who alone possesses the power, has wonderfully adapted the race to their condition. For every candid observer agrees that the negro is happier and better as a slave than as a free man, and no individual belonging to the Anglo-Saxon stock would acknowledge that the intellect of the negro is equal to his own.

There have been philosophers and physiologists who contended that the African race were not strictly entitled to be called *men* at all, but were a sort of intermediate link between the baboon and the human being. And this notion is still maintained by some at the present day. For myself, however, I can only say that I repudiate the doctrine with my whole heart. The Scriptures show me that the negro, like all other races, descends from Noah, and I hold him to be a *MAN* and a *BROTHER*. But though he be my *brother*, it does not follow that he is my *equal*. Equality can not be found on earth between the brothers even in one little family. In the same house, one brother usually obtains a mastery over the rest, and sometimes rules them with a perfect despotism. In England, the elder brother inherits the estate, and the younger brothers take a lower rank, by the *slavery of circumstances*. The

eldest son of the royal family is in due time the king, and his brothers forthwith become his subjects. Why should not the same principle obtain in the races of mankind, if the Almighty has so willed it? The Anglo-Saxon race is king, why should not the African race be subject, and subject in that way for which it is best adapted, and in which it may be more safe, more useful, and more happy than in any other which has yet been opened to it, in the annals of the world?

I know that there may be exceptions, now and then, to this intellectual inferiority of the negro race, though I believe it would be very difficult to find one, unless the intermixture of superior blood has operated to change the mental constitution of the individual. For all such cases the master may provide by voluntary emancipation, and it is notorious that this emancipation has been cheerfully given in thousands upon thousands of instances, in the majority of which the gift of liberty has failed to benefit the negro, and has, on the contrary, sunk him far lower, in his social position. But no reflecting man can believe that the great mass of the slaves, amounting to nearly four millions, are qualified for freedom. And therefore it is incomparably better for them to remain under the government of their masters, who are likely to provide for them so much more beneficially than they could provide for themselves.

The difference then, between the power of the Northern parent and the Southern slaveholder, is reduced to this, namely, that the master has a *property in the labor of his slave for life*, instead of having it only to the age of twenty-one, because the law regards the negro as being always a child in understanding, requiring a superior mind to govern and direct him. But, on the other hand, the slave has just as really a *property for life in his master's support and protection*, and this property is secured to him by the same law, in sickness and in health, in the helplessness of old age, as well as in the days of youthful vigor, including, besides, a comfortable maintenance for his wife and family. Can any rational judgment devise a fairer equivalent?

The fifth objection, which often meets the Northern ear, proceeds from the overweening value attached, in our age and country, to the name of liberty, since it is common to call it the dearest right of man, and to esteem its loss as the greatest possible calamity. Hence

we frequently find persons who imagine that the whole argument is triumphantly settled by the question: "*How would you like to be a slave?*"

In answer to this very puerile interrogatory, I should say that whether any condition in life is to be regarded as a loss or an advantage, depends entirely on circumstances. Suppose, for example, that the Mayor of New-York should ask one of its merchant princes: "How would you like to be a policeman?" I doubt whether the question might not be taken for an insult, and some words of indignation would probably be uttered in reply. But suppose that the same question were addressed to an Irish laborer, with what feelings would he receive it? Assuredly with those of gratitude and pleasure. The reason of the difference is obvious, because the employment which would be a degradation to the one, offers promotion and dignity to the other. In like manner, slavery, to an individual of the Anglo-Saxon race, which occupies so high a rank in human estimation, would be a debasement not to be thought of with patience for a moment. And yet, to the Guinea negro, sunk in heathen barbarism, it would be a happy change to place him in the hands of a Southern master. Even now, although the slaves have no idea of the pagan abominations from which their forefathers were taken, it is notorious that they usually value their privileges as being far superior to the condition of the free negroes around them, and prefer the certainty of protection and support for life to the hazards of the liberty on which the abolitionist advises them to venture. How much more would they prize their present lot, if they understood that, were it not for this very institution of slavery, they would be existing in the darkest idolatry and licentiousness among the savages of Africa, under the despotic King of Dahomey, destitute of every security for earthly comfort, and deprived of all religious hope for the world to come!

If men would reflect maturely on the subject, they would soon be convinced that liberty is a blessing to those, and only these, who are *able to use it wisely*. There are thousands in our land, free according to law, but so enslaved to vice and the misery consequent on vice, that it would be a mercy to place them, supposing it were possible, under the rule of some other will, stronger and better than their

own. As it is, they are in bondage to Satan, notwithstanding their imaginary freedom; and they do his bidding, not merely in the work of the body, but in the far worse slavery of the soul. Strictly speaking, however, the freest man on earth has no *absolute liberty*, for this belongs alone to God, and is not given to any creature. And hence it is the glory of the Christian to be the *bond servant* of the divine Redeemer who "bought us to himself with his own precious blood." The *service of Christ*, as saith the Apostle, is "the only *perfect freedom*." All who refuse that service, are slaves of necessity to other masters; slaves to Mammon; slaves to ambition; slaves to lust; slaves to intemperance; slaves to a thousand forms of anxious care and perplexity; slaves at best to pride and worldly decorum, and slaves to circumstances over which they have no control. And they are compelled to labor without ceasing under some or all of these despotic rulers, at the secret will of that spiritual task-master, whose bondage does not end at death, but continues to eternity.

The sixth objection arises from the fact that slavery separates the husband from the wife and the parents from the children. Undoubtedly it sometimes does so, from necessity. Before we adopt this fact, however, as an argument against slavery, it is only fair to inquire whether the same separation do not take place, perhaps quite as frequently, amongst those who call themselves free. The laboring man who has a large family is always obliged to separate from his children, because it is impossible to support them in his humble home. They are sent to service, therefore, one to this master and another to that, or bound as apprentices, as the case may be, and thus the domestic relations are superseded by strangers, for the most part beyond recovery. So among the lower orders, the husbands are separated from their wives by the same necessity. How many, even of the better classes, have left their homes to seek their fortune in the gold regions! How many in Europe have abandoned their families for Australia, or the United States, or the Canadas! How many desert them from pure wickedness — a crime which can hardly happen under the Southern system! But above all, how constantly does this separation take place amongst our soldiers and sailors, so that neither war nor foreign commerce could be car-

ried on at all without it! All these are borne by *freemen*, under the *slavery of circumstances*. Is it wise to declaim against this necessity in one form, when we are forced to submit to it in so many other kinds of the same infliction?

There is only one other argument which occurs to me, requiring notice, and that is based upon the erroneous notion that the laws of God, under the Mosaic dispensation, allowed polygamy as well as slavery; and, therefore, it is inferred that the legislation of the Old Testament is of no authority upon the subject, but as the Gospel did away the first, so also it should do away the other.

The facts here are misunderstood, and the inference is without any real foundation. Let us look at the matter as it is explained by the Saviour himself. "The Pharisees came to him, tempting him, and saying unto him: Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them: Have ye not read that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female; and said, for this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together let no man put asunder. They say unto him: Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and put her away? He saith unto them: Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery, and whoso marrieth her that is put away, doth commit adultery." (Matt. 19: 3-9.)

Now, here our Lord plainly lays down the original law of marriage, referring expressly to Adam and Eve, one man and one woman, declared to be *one flesh*, and adding the command, *What God hath joined together let no man put asunder*. But it is evident that polygamy must, of necessity, interfere with this divine union. The *twain* can no longer be *one flesh*, when another wife is brought between them, because the new wife must deprive the former one of her exclusive rights and privileges, and the husband destroys the very unity which God designed in joining them together. The doctrine

of our Saviour, therefore, restores the law of marriage to its original sanctity, and the apostles, accordingly, always speak of the wife in the singular number, in no instance appearing to contemplate the possibility of the Christian having more wives than one, while, in the case of a bishop, St. Paul specifies it as an essential condition that he shall be "the husband of one wife." (1 Tim. 3 : 2.)

But how had the chosen people been allowed for so many centuries to practice polygamy, and divorce their wives for the slightest cause? Our Lord explains it by saying that *Moses* suffered them to put away their wives "because of the hardness of their hearts." The special questions addressed to him by the Pharisees, did not, indeed, refer to polygamy, but only to the liberty of divorce, for at that time it should seem that the practice of polygamy had well nigh ceased in *Judea*, and it is certainly not countenanced by the Jewish laws at this day. The principle, however, is precisely the same in the two cases. Dissatisfaction with the present wife and desire for another, were the cause of action in both; and when the husband did not wish to be burdened by the murmurs or the support of his old companion, he would naturally prefer to send her away, in order to make room for her successor. We see, then, how readily this facility of divorce became the mode in which the Jews of that day sought for the gratification of their capricious attachments, instead of the more expensive and troublesome system of polygamy. And hence our Lord applied the remedy, where it was specially required, by forbidding divorces unless for the weightiest cause, such as adultery. Yet this was no change in the divine arrangement, which had been the same from the beginning. He expressly declares, on the contrary, that the latitude assumed by the Israelites was an *indulgence granted by Moses*, on account of "the hardness of their hearts." And this is a very different thing from an authoritative decree of the Almighty.

It is surely therefore manifest, from this language of our Saviour, that God had never given any direct sanction to polygamy. Doubtless, as we must infer from many parts of the Old Testament, it had become common among the Israelites, who, supposing themselves justified by the case of Jacob, had probably adopted it in so many instances that Moses did not think it

safe or prudent to put it down, lest worse evils might follow, unless he was constrained to do so by the positive command of the Almighty. All that can be truly stated, therefore, is, that *no such positive command* was given, and the Deity left the human law-giver to use his own discretion in the matter.

Such is the aspect of this question, according to the statement of our Lord, which must be conclusive to every Christian. And hence we may perceive, at once, that the case is in no respect parallel to that of slavery. For here the Almighty caused his favored servant Noah to predict that the posterity of Ham should be the servants of servants, under the descendants of Shem and Japhet. He recognized the bondman and the bondmaid in the ten commandments. He laid down the positive law to Israel that they should buy the children of the heathen that were round about them, and of the strangers who dwelt in their land, to serve them and their families forever. The Saviour, when he appeared, made no allusion to the subject, but plainly declared that he had not come to destroy the law. The first church of believers in Jerusalem were all "zealous" for the law. And St. Paul preached obedience to the slaves among the Gentile churches, and sent a converted slave back to his Christian master.

Where, then, is the resemblance between these cases? In the matter of divorce and polygamy, the Deity is silent, leaving them to the discretion of Moses, until the Messiah should come. But in regard to the slavery of Ham's posterity, he issues his commands distinctly. And the Saviour disclaims the intention to repeal the laws of his heavenly Father, while he asserts the original design of marriage, and his inspired Apostle gives express sanction to slavery, and speaks of the one husband and the one wife, in direct accordance with the word of his divine Master. Here, therefore, it is plain that the cases are altogether unlike, and present a contrast, rather than a comparison.

We know that the doctrine of the primitive church was in harmony with this, for polygamy was never permitted, nor divorcees for trifling causes, while slavery was allowed, as being perfectly lawful, so long as the slave was treated with justice and kindness. The ancient canons sometimes advert to the mode in which slaves might be corrected. Bishops and clergy held

slaves. In later times, bondmen and bondmaids were in the service of convents and monasteries. And no scruple was entertained upon the subject until the close of the last century, when the new light burst forth which now dazzles the eyes of so many worthy people, and blinds them not only to the plain statements of Scriptures, but to the interests of national unity and peace.

Thus, then, I have examined the various topics embraced in your inquiry, and the conclusion which I have been compelled to adopt must be sufficiently manifest. The slavery of the negro race, as maintained in the Southern States, appears to me fully authorized both in the Old and the New Testament, which, as the written Word of God, afford the only infallible standard of moral rights and obligations. That very slavery, in my humble judgment, has raised the negro incomparably higher in the scale of humanity, and seems, in fact, to be the only instrumentality through which the heathen posterity of Ham have been raised at all. Out of that slavery has arisen the interesting colony of Liberia, planted by slaveholders, to be a place of refuge for their emancipated bondmen, and destined, as I hope, to be a rich benefit, in its future growth and influence, to Africa and to the world. I do not forget, and I trust that I do not undervalue, the missionary work of England and our own land, in that benighted continent. But I believe that the number of negroes Christianized and civilized at the South, through the system of slavery, exceeds the product of those missionary labors, in a proportion of thousands to one. And thus the wisdom and goodness of God are vindicated in the sanction which his word has given, and the sentence originally pronounced on Canaan as a curse has been converted into a blessing.

I have now gone over the whole ground covered by your kind application, and would only here repeat that on the question of slavery, which lies at the root of all our present difficulties, I have obeyed the rule of conscience and of duty, in opposition to my habits, my prejudices, and my sympathies, all of which would tend strongly to the other side. I need hardly say that I am no politician. More than forty years have elapsed since I ceased even to attend the polls. But as a Christian, I am bound to accept the doctrine of the apostles for my guide. And as a

citizen, I am bound to sustain the Constitution of the United States, and defend those principles of law, and order, and friendly comity, which every State should faithfully regard in its relations to the rest. Nor is this the first time that I have expressed my opinions. In a lecture at Buffalo, published in 1850, and again in a volume entitled *The American Citizen*, printed by Putney & Russell, in 1857, I set forth the same views on the subject of slavery; adding, however, a plan for its gradual abolition, whenever the South should consent, and the whole strength of the Government could aid in its accomplishment. Sooner or later, I believe that some measure of that character must be adopted. But it belongs to the slave States themselves to take the lead in such a movement. And meanwhile, their legal rights and their natural feelings must be respected, if we would hope for unity and peace.

In conclusion, I would only say, that I am perfectly aware how distasteful my sentiments must be, on this very serious question, to the great majority of my respected fellow-citizens, in the region where divine Providence has cast my lot. It would assuredly be far more agreeable if I could conscientiously conform to the opinions of my friends, to whose ability, sincerity, and zeal I am ready to give all just commendation. But it would be mere moral cowardice in me to suppress what I believe to be the truth, for the sake of popularity. It can not be long before I shall stand at the tribunal of that Almighty and unerring Judge, who has given us the inspired Scriptures to be our supreme directory in every moral and religious duty. My gray hairs admonish me that I may soon be called to give an account of my stewardship. And I have no fear of the sentence which He will pronounce upon an honest though humble effort to sustain the authority of His Word, in just alliance with the Constitution, the peace, and the public welfare of my country.

With the fervent prayer that the Spirit of Wisdom, unity, and fraternal kindness may guide our National Congress, the Legislatures of the several States, and the sovereign will of our whole people, to a happy accommodation of every existing difficulty,

I remain, with great regard,

Your faithful servant in Christ,

JOHN H. HOPKINS,

Bishop of the Diocese of Vermont.